

NCCAT – S Glossary of Terms

Alignment

Alignment is the degree to which curriculum, instruction, or assessment is related to content standard expectations for student learning.

- **Vertical alignment** is the degree to which expectations progress from lower grade levels to higher grade levels for a given content area.
- **Horizontal alignment** is the degree to which expectations are matched across classrooms for the same grade level in the same content area.

Assessment

Measuring the learning and performance of students or teachers. Different types of assessment instruments include achievement tests, minimum competency tests, developmental screening tests, aptitude tests, observation instruments, performance tasks, and authentic assessments.

Classroom assessments

Teacher/school generated measurements of student achievement of performance goals and objectives.

Curriculum

Although this term has many possible meanings, it usually refers to a written plan outlining what students will be taught (a course of study). Curriculum documents often also include detailed directions or suggestions for teaching the content. Curriculum may refer to all the courses offered at a given school, or all the courses offered at a school in a particular area of study.

Effective Instruction

A critically important characteristic of a successful instructional program is that it is effective at promoting student learning. Effective instruction in Nevada schools is empirically-proven instructional practice that achieves the goals of forwarding student learning and achievement of grade-level content standards. Effectiveness is demonstrable and defensible.

Instructional Staff

The instructional staff is the school-based personnel, other than principals, responsible for the supervision, instruction, and evaluation of students. This group should include teachers, librarians, counselors, psychologists, resource teachers and other specialists charged with instructional duties.

Quality, Balanced Assessments

Educational assessments measure student learning. Different types of assessment instruments include summative tests, formative tests, diagnostic or predictive tests, minimum competency tests, developmental screening tests, aptitude tests, observation

instruments, performance tasks, and authentic assessments. Assessments can be given at the state, local or classroom levels.

Assessments should provide valuable information to Nevada students, teachers, administrators, and parents. They should be of high quality, be valid and reliable, and be available to all students in the state. Assessments should also be balanced in order to provide valuable data collected *of* and *for* student learning. A quality balanced assessment system includes both summative and formative assessments, promotes improvement of student learning, and involves the students in ongoing evaluation of their own work.

Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Effective instruction and achievement of content standards requires careful monitoring of student progress. Effective progress monitoring is research-based, assesses students' academic performance, and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

Standards-based System

Nevada schools operate within a standards-based system. Expectations for students are based on identified knowledge and skills students must first learn and then demonstrate on assessments. Teachers are responsible for the critical task of ensuring that students are given opportunity to learn the standards through purposeful curriculum and instruction and classroom assessments. School, District, and State administrators are responsible for the critical task of ensuring teachers are given the opportunity to teach and develop professionally in order to support student learning targets. Summative, statewide assessments provide feedback to the system through student achievement on those targets.